

**"Whom does
the Bhagavad-Gîtâ belong to?"**



F. T. BROOKS.

गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय, हरिद्वार
पुस्तकालय



RA

विप संख्या 294.59204

पुस्तक संख्या 1379W

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प्रकार की निशानियां

ल १५ दिन से अधिक

न रखें।

गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय
कृपया पुस्तक के ऊपर कोई निशान आदि
न लगायें।

पुस्तकालय

गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय, हरिद्वार

वर्ग संख्या

आगत संख्या.....

पुस्तक विवरण की तिथि नीचे अंकित है। इस तिथि सहित ३० वें दिन यह पुस्तक पुस्तकालय में वापस आ जानी चाहिए। अन्यथा ५० पैसे प्रति दिन के हिसाब से विलम्ब दण्ड लगेगा।

स्टाक प्रमाणीकरण १९८४-१९८५

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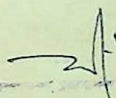
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गुरुकुल कांगड़ी पुस्तकालय को

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BELONG TO?”**

A LECTURE BY
F. T. BROOKS.

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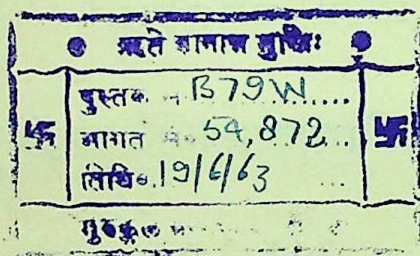
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FOREWORD.

HERE is a lecture in its crudest form, as given—unwashed, undraped, untrimmed, unshaved, unkempt. The matter of it—after due revision, with more detailed treatment of a point or two—may either run on as a separate booklet or be included as a preliminary chapter in future Indian Editions of *The Gospel of Life*, Vol. 1.

The lecture was never, in its present crude form, intended for circulation outside India. Delivered before an exclusively Indian male audience, at a time when the lecturer had not even seen the face of one of Mrs. Grundy's grand-daughters for months on end, it exhibits to a degree the reprehensible Indian conversational habit of calling a spade a spade, and contains not a few rough and ready expressions which may well jar upon ears accustomed to conventional methods of adumbration. The most obnoxious passage, in this respect, is probably that on p. 8, to which a writer in another Theosophical Section Magazine has kindly drawn attention. The incipient human animal is purposely there pictured in its ungarnished physiological simplicity with a view, not to condemnation and avoidance (how *could* we avoid the baby—and are *we* not unborn or at best new-born babies in most things?) but, on the contrary, to encouraging and illustrating (as clearly implied

in the reference to the "mother's eyes") the clear-eyed vision of beautiful possibilities even in the midst of the most (apparently) unpromising actualities.

Let us then, instead of turning aside in disgust, learn to look upon all our painful or vulgar surroundings (including even, if need be, the literary shortcomings of a crude sketch such as this) with the true mother's eyes ; and let us help coax forth from whatever situation is given us to deal with all the beautiful possibilities it may—nay, *must* conceal. For such is the secret of God's World. *Sursum corda.*

BENARES, 19th December, 1911.

गुरुकुल कांगड़ी पुस्तकालय को
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FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION.

AFTER vainly struggling for years to push on his lecturing work in connection with the Theosophical Society the author has, since December 1913, severed a connection which was becoming more and more meaningless. The Theosophical Society has, under Mrs. Annie Besant's Presidentship, developed into a fantastically anomalous seat, exoterically unsectarian, esoterically sectarian, the esoteric controlling the exoteric in a roundabout manner, calculated to stifle all such free views as the author puts forward, while disclaiming all responsibility—nay, even denying interference. It is with a sigh of relief that the author finds himself once more in the open, thankful for all experience gained, but determined to work independently in future, freely co-operating with all liberal endeavour, but jealously guarding against entanglement.

The author may be congratulated upon the fact that all the books published during his membership in the T. S. are in reality independent books, dealing with the Free and Universal Theosophy in which he believes. He carries them with him into freedom, and trusts that they may meet a demand and thus help to carry him on into whatever further useful work, both literary and practical, may lie ahead.

Those wanting further facts and fuller reasons are referred to "*My Heresies*," "*My Resignation*,"¹ and other pamphlets that are still in preparation while this foreword is being written.

This booklet is offered to the public as a simple introduction to the study of the *Bhagavad Gītā* from the Catholic Theosophical standpoint.

Those interested in the views herein set forth are invited to continue with *Kurukshetra*, *The Gospel of Life*, *The Mind-Aspect of Salvation*, *Sannyāsa*.

The vicissitudes of the last five years have prevented the issue of an annotated edition of the *Gīta* and the principal *Upanishads*. The long-awaited publication of these depends entirely upon the author's success in raising funds as an independent lecturer. Sympathetic readers are invited to contribute to the author's Publication Fund, as well as to his Travelling Fund.

MYLAPORE, MADRAS, 22nd January, 1914.

¹ Both pamphlets together, 4 annas. *Vyāsāshrama*, Mylapore, Madras.

WHOM DOES THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ BELONG TO?



[The first of a Series of Six Lectures on "*The Religion which we all need to-day*," delivered in the Hall of the *Shrī Shankara* (Sringeri) *Mutt*, Bangalore, in 1911.—Verbatim Report.]

BROTHERS,

During these few evenings, we shall have a series of talks on a subject which, I take it, is in itself extremely important. Whatever dulness or lack of interest there may be about it, will certainly be due not to the subject, but to the speaker. For that I trust you will forgive me.

The subject, then, to those who will have read the Notice with sufficient closeness, is one of world-wide importance; and it is one of national importance to India. India and the World have been thrown together of late in a way which may be liked or not liked—but *so it happens to be*. The question now is, how to make the best of it?

India having been thrown into contact with

the World as she never was before, various aspects of India's life, ancient and modern, have to be ventilated. And I think it is almost a waste of energy to protest against a thing which has taken place, when one has not yet thoroughly sifted the thing and seen whether it is at bottom good or bad.

Many events which, taken at first sight, seen on the surface, may appear somewhat ominous to near-sighted people, work really for ultimate good. And to those who understand anything of the vital aspect of Ancient India's Religion, the Religion, not of mere formal ceremonialism and kitchen-observances, but of Practical Life—*Yoga*—the organic response of the Human Soul, clothed in an organic human body, to the wit-scattering circumstances with which God's Will, working in His Universe, surrounds it; the attempt of the Human Soul to *master* circumstance through God's inborn Power and *make it organic*, never to escape therefrom—to those, I say, who sincerely endeavour to *see and live* in the light of that Most Ancient Practical Philosophy, I take it that there are no circum-

stances that are not fruitful of Teaching, that are not fruitful of real Strength and Good.

Now the question to-day is, what has India got to say to the Religious Progress of the World? The World is nowadays, as you all know, being thrown together. Different countries, different nationalities, different races are being brought into a closeness of contact which never was before. Modern invention has helped to bring this about—steamboats, railways, telegraphs, post-office, newspapers—all these wonderful agencies due to the invention of the printing press and other mechanical appliances, are now gradually bringing the whole of Humanity and all its parts to the notice of every educated individual; and the proportion of these is increasing by leaps and bounds.

It is essential to note that this is a process that is only beginning. For barely a generation or two has this universal communion, as I shall call it, been ushered in. No wonder, therefore, that the peoples should not know as yet how to utilize to the fullest extent all the wonderful means of swifter progress that have

been so suddenly thrust into their hands. Most of you believe in rebirth. Now if you believe in that, you will understand that the Human Soul learns its lessons, not in one life, but in many. You will understand that a person born with an innate comprehension of certain, say, scientific, or religious, or even linguistic data (particularly in the case of ancient languages like the Sanskrit)—a person, for instance, born with a natural capacity for understanding Sanskrit—you will easily be led to surmise that such a person must have been previously born in India, and have thus known Sanskrit before. A person, likewise, born with an inherent capacity for music, must have developed in some previous life artistic ability in music.

Now when you have to deal with the art of knowing your fellow-men, of understanding people of different races, different languages, different religions, different social customs—it is an Art, mind you, and not a very easy one at that;—when you begin to deal with *that* Art, there you have an aspect of human life, what I may call the aspect of Cosmopolitan Under-

standing, in which barely a handful of human souls have ever been trained in the past.

For if you go back, say, five thousand years, through all those centuries of the past extensive travel was a rarity. Barring tradesmen intent on lucre and nothing else, only a few here and there, a few bold explorers, a few travelling philosophers, went about from country to country. These, and these only, might you expect to see reborn with an innate capacity to *understand* their fellow-men of different races, different nationalities and different religions. But the vast mass of Humanity, with soul-memory a blank, as it usually is to-day, ushered all of a sudden, by these cheap means of transit and communication, railways, telegraphs and so on, ushered for the first time into international communion, must needs be unable to make all at once a thoroughly right use of these means. And so you see that these means of international communication are used mainly by selfish people, greedy for money, speculators on the Stock-Exchange. The telegraph serves largely to transmit all of a sudden from

London to New-York, Calcutta, Hong-Kong, the fluctuations of the Stock-Exchange. All this, after all, you will rightly say, is part of the lower life of Humanity—all this struggle and scramble for wealth. There is nothing spiritual in it. But I say, however unspiritual the *use* that is at present made of these wonderful means of communion, *the very fact of Communion is a spiritual Fact*. For there is only *one* thing that is unspiritual, in this world or any other—and that is *separateness*.

Now these means of *communion* may well be made use of, for a while, by separateness, by selfish people; for it seems that Humanity, in the mass, is in a deplorably unorganised condition—that we have practically as yet no organised, conscious collective Will to accomplish our higher Destiny. But let good and unselfish people, yearners for a better state of things—and there are more of these than you suppose, perhaps—come out from their subjective meditations and betake themselves to the doing of Spiritual Deeds, and we shall soon see the beginning of a deeper aspect

of this great historical Transformation that we are going through in the present day.

As a matter of fact, it is a turning point in History that we are going through, and a most wonderful one. And I take it that these marvelous means of International Communion belong at bottom to the Soul of Humanity, not to the money-grubbers; and shall be used and *must* be ultimately used and controlled (all in good time) by the Soul of Humanity. For all that is good and great and steadily successful, all that has to do with the "Union that makes Strength," leads up ultimately—however partial the beginnings—to some expression of Universal Wisdom.

Hence if you see these wonderful means at present used only for lower ends, I say there is nothing more surprising in that than in the fact, say, that the body of an unborn baby, still being built up in its mother's womb, is a mere animal foetus, and nothing more.

Suppose you have a father and a mother that are destined to give birth to a genius. Take the X-Ray Eye and inspect the thing while it is being

built, some months before the child is born. You will see that this *thing* (I do not know what else to call it) goes through various forms, is akin to a fish, a frog, a dog, and God knows what—an unborn animal *thing* that merely sucks up blood, and grows. What can there be in common between a Genius, and *that*? But wait a bit. By and by it is born, and then . . . it begins to cream, to make horrid noises and a nasty mess. For that is what a small baby is—an animal body, a thing that squeals and takes in food and gives out dirt. Unless you happen to look through a mother's eyes, you can see nothing there as yet except these purely animal things—blood-vessels, flesh, skin, etc.—still being put together, though by a different method. But wait a bit longer. By and by, as the child grows, you will begin to see something else: unselfish characteristics, uncommon understanding, quaint childish wisdom. Later on you will have there a great Man, a great Genius, some one of whom Humanity may be proud. And yet the beginnings are in purely animal life, in swilling, swelling flesh and blood and bone and nerve.

Similarly I venture to suggest to you that all these new developments, these new growths, these instrumental prolongations of the rudimentary Body of Humanity, these telegraphic wires, these lines of rapid transit by land and water (and what of now incipient flights by air ?) are as nerves and blood-vessels and subtle life-channels under construction for the ultimately healthy interchange and circulation, the happy communion in spirit, mind, heart, wealth, which a United Humanity demands. All these things, as you see them now, are but the first animal stirrings, the vulgar, material beginnings of something that is destined ultimately to be as great as Humanity itself. And if at the bottom of Humanity there is God, you will find that ultimately God will reveal Himself in this new Common Life on Earth into which all men are swiftly being ushered to-day.

Now the question is : India has been thrown, like other countries, into communion with the rest of the World. What the immediate means have been, matters little: they were only instrumental ; let bygones be bygones. The unavoid-

able *fact* is, that in the future the progress of India *must be* in conjunction with the rest of the World, and not apart from it. You can no more thrust things back into the past life of geographical separateness, of religious aloofness, than you can force a baby back into its mother's womb.

India is therefore now on the threshold of a new era of development *in conjunction with the rest of Humanity*. Is India going to rouse herself from age-long slumbers and step forward boldly into the future, hand in hand with more and more united sister-nations; or will she only be to these an offset to their youthful pride, a standing example of hoary, collective failure, ultimately a gigantic weak limb, a drain on the life and a drag upon the progress of the World?

Here, be it understood, we have essentially to do with Religion. But, as you will see, Religion, as *we* must understand it, is something that *includes everything else of life*. Hence, although the rest may not be expressly mentioned, you will remember that I take Religion as including *all* aspects of collective human endeavour. Religion

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is the one constructive factor in all life. And if at any time other aspects of life take on the appearance of evil, it is because Religion is left out of them.

So, although we shall be considering all these problems, here, from the standpoint of Religion, yet I wish you to understand that that standpoint is an all-inclusive standpoint, and that Religion is ultimately intended to include science, art, politics, medicine and all the rest. The very word "Religion" means the binding together, the linking together, the co-ordination, the synthesis, in God, of Man and everything else. "Re-ligio" means "re-binding."

Now the question is : From the standpoint of Religion, what has India to say in connection with, in concert with the rest of the World ? Has India something to give to the World, to the religious enlightenment of the World, to the religious Progress of the World ? Has India got in herself the means of her own synthetic, religious Progress ?

For Progress must be the keynote of everything, nowadays. If there is a sickening, a yearn-

ing for something new, in this country, a feeling of a need for change—that uneasiness, that unrest that we see everywhere is due simply to the fact that the Ideal of Progress had, until quite recently, been lost sight of. Religion had become unprogressive, Society had become unprogressive. The idea of *improving* was there no more—the idea of seeking to make to-morrow better than to-day. Without that Ideal, of course, there is death. If there is no progress, there is retrogression. You must have either the one or the other.

Missing this Ideal of Progress, most people who claimed to be very religious, very orthodox, to set the fashion in religious matters, had an idea that they must simply act according to their *dharma*—meaning thereby something that ‘should be done’ here, not in order to improve matters, but in order to win for themselves the right of escape, of ‘liberation’ *from* this troublous world. *That* has been the keynote of latter-day Indian Religion. Whether on the lines of *jñānam* or of *bhakti*, the Soul of India has been a spiring, not to make India, and, through her,

Humanity, better and more prosperous than before, but to win release from trouble and suffering for the individual. The *jñāni* sets himself to attain it by sheer intellectual abstraction, and the *bhākta* sets himself to attain it by catching hold of the Feet of God, as it were, in order to be drawn up somewhere into a region of happiness and freedom from earthly cares. But hardly one so-called 'religious' man has latterly dared look straight *into* this poor rotten world with optimistic eyes of understanding, has dared brood over the world-evil with God-based confident intent to hatch out of it something better than what he found.

That ideal of Progress, then, has been lost sight of among the 'orthodox,' and the moral paralysis engendered has spread abroad from the learned few to the ignorant many; and without that Ideal there can be no national progress, no commercial progress, no industrial progress, no social progress, no progress in learning, or happiness, or health, no progress in any of the things which men find to be good. And I tell you that if, in any country, Religion does not

inspire the people with an Ideal of Progress, then a time comes, a time must come, when the people do not want that 'Religion' any more. If you cannot progress *with* your Religion, and *through* it, then you *must* progress *without* it. And many are the people, in India and outside, who are pointing the finger of scorn at this Ancient Hindu Religion, saying that, apart from mere formalism, it is a religion of abstract meditation, of subjectivity, and all sorts of big philosophical words and practical uselessness; and that such a religion tends to emasculate people, tends to lead all *good* men (the women *seem* to be nowhere) to be a very-holy-and-do-nothing sort of saints, while of course *bad* people and silly people are left to make a mess of things in the outer world.

So the Christian missionary, amongst others, will say. He will tell you that you are useless, helpless, unable to co-operate among yourselves (how then with others?) and that the fault lies at the door of *your Hindu Religion*.

"Your Religion," he says, "is to blame. Your Religion has made you what you are. Look at

our Religion! It has made *us* what *we* are—a vigorous, energetic, pushing, progressive people. Our Religion has taught us to pray to God, ‘Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done *on Earth* as it is in Heaven,’ and to labour accordingly in this His Vineyard. *Your* Religion has taught you otherwise, so that you either waste your time in vain ceremonies and cripple yourselves by vain observances—or else you want to turn your back on the whole show to find *Nirvāna*—annihilation. Well, if you *will* go, good-bye to you.....ta-ta...Meanwhile pray note that, as long as *you* are not engaged in doing good to your fellow-men on any lines of your own, it is idle for you to complain of *our* trying to do good to them on Christian lines.”

Of course those missionaries of an alien faith are mistaken when they throw the blame on your Religion. They think that people are made by their particular religion, instead of seeing the patent fact that it is not true that latter-day religions have made the peoples what they are, but that the truth is exactly the other way—that the latter-day peoples have made their re-

ligions what they *now* are. Yet it is natural that they should say such things, seeing that they must seek to remove other religions from the field in order to make room for the particular religion which they have been sent here to preach.

Really, the main cause of 'Christian' vigour and bustle is not far to seek. You need only remember that those Christian nations that have progressed most in that way, have been living in climates that required vigorous exercise. Some Christians seem to forget that Jesus of Nazareth was an Oriental. If you look at the development of early Christianity in the Orient during the centuries it flourished there, you will see that it became almost essentially, especially in Egypt, a religion of runaway '*sannyasa*.' Why, even now, in the warmer Southern countries of Europe, in Roman Catholic countries, you find thousands of the best men and women, year in, year out, leaving the world, and going to bury themselves alive in cloisters. So, conversely, bustling vigorous people, in England, North America and other countries, have made *their* Christianity a vigorous, bustling religion. And

now their missionaries boast that their religion *has made them*, whereas your religion has crippled you ; and they conclude : “ Throw off your religion and take up ours, and you will be made into a vigorous nation. ” I have said enough to show you the fallacy of this.

Now I say that *any* great Religion, in its ultimate basis, in its true essence, is *not* the belief or practice of the latter-day bigot, but that it is the utterance of Wisdom by the God-Inspired Sage. What I am going to show you, in all these lectures, is that Hinduism, in order not merely to progress, but to be the most scientifically, the most safely progressive religion of all, in order not merely to make its own adherents progress, but to inspire with ideals of harmonious, organic progress millions of intelligent men and women all the world over, Hinduism need by no means jump out of its own skin, but has only to *re-read its own Scriptures in the light of the Ideal of Progress* which is now being forced by the irresistible power of circumstance upon all intelligent Hindus. Do this, and you will find your own Scriptures teeming with the most beautiful,

most glorious, most noble Ideals of LIFE. Drop the idea of disgust and weariness—that this world is an evil, that it is all *mâyā*. Say to yourselves that this world is the Field of Action, into which God has thrown us all—fellow-souls, brother-souls—in order that we should, through understanding this life more and more, gradually come to know HIM at the back of it all, and not merely to *know* HIM, but to express HIM in our own lives. Take, then, these vigorous Ideals, and read, and *live*.

That was what I did, after all.

I am a mere creature of circumstance. I came to India, ten or twelve years ago, at the request of other people. (If you think me a nuisance, you may take Mrs. Annie Besant and her friends to task. Hers is the '*karma*,' if any.) I was a student of Religion; I was 'following the Gleam' in my own way, and was glad to read, study, digest, anything that might help me in the living of my life, in the carrying out of my destiny. In this light, I began to read some of your old *śāstras*, and by and by I became able to decipher them in the original *Sanskrit*, leaving gradually

aside translations, that have been hitherto largely filtered through the minds of latter-day, speculative Hindus, even when they are made by Europeans. If you read Max Muller's translations, you will find that they are always coloured by a single type of commentary. And the idea of modern Orientalists as to *nirvāna* being annihilation pure and simple, has been derived by Westerners from the unprogressive, pessimistic latter-day philosophy of India.

Now I tried my best to shake that off, because I never cared for scholarship and learning, save as mere intermediate means through which I might contrive to find some living *Good* in these old *śāstras* of yours, to help me lead my life. So dropping all those commentaries (which the translations always imply) and beginning to read the Books, *Gita* and *Upanishads*, in the original, I soon began to feel that the Religion inculcated in these was really something quite different from what it was supposed to be. There seemed to me to be a vigorous manliness, a broad, and deep, and practical spirit, an *unfailing optimism* and even a quaint sense of humour in those

ancient Books. Of course, nowadays, orthodox Hindus would hardly appreciate humour in Religion. They would no more dream of associating humour with religion than of bringing leather shoes into a temple. But these, my Brothers, are real Scriptures of *Life*, whereas latterly they seem to have been interpreted into scriptures of death.

So, I began to study your *shāstras* as Scriptures of *Life*. At first I had no idea of ever lecturing about them, as I thought that would be like carrying coals to Newcastle. It took time to realise how thoroughly Hindus are, by their intellectual habits, shut out from all *vital* communion with their own Scripture. But now that I clearly recognise the *Bhagavad-Gita* as a Scripture of *my own Religion*—since it is what I am trying my best to *live by*, I feel I have a right to speak on it where I am asked to.

I was not required to make up my mind alone in the matter. It came about like this: Some people—mainly Theosophical students—asked me whether I could throw light on this or that difficulty that they had met with in their study.

पं० इन्द्र बिद्यावाचस्पति स्मृति संग्रह

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When I gave them my views, they somehow found them helpful, and they asked for more. And so, little, by little, I was led to lecture—terrible impertinence ! Once, at the end of a lecture, some one asked me very bluntly what authority I had to speak on Hindu *shāstras*. All I could do was to reply : “ You yourself are my authority. If you did not sit there listening to me, do you think I would be standing here, talking ? I should more probably be having a game of tennis at this time of day. ”

My authority? I have no authority save what you yourselves give me by coming here of your own accord ; and I do not want any other. Even if the King, or the Pope, or the President of my own Society, were to ask me to lecture to you, and you did not want it, how on earth could I do it ? No, there is a vital interest in the subject, and you know it, else you would not be here. The question is, whether Hinduism has in itself the material for national religious inspiration in the future, and for religious communion with the rest of Humanity besides. This question runs right through the whole series of my lectures.

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and I am going to answer it, right through, in the affirmative. But first, to-day, I shall simply remove one of the difficulties that lie in the way.

The first difficulty, which I shall deal with to-day, is due to a certain ingrained idea in the minds of many of your people who have not thought much about the real meaning of Religion. The idea, for instance, that the *Bhagavad-Gita* is "*our shāstra*," and nobody else should use it.

Of course it is a very natural sort of pride, this—an aspect of the sense of proprietorship, so widely respected nowadays. It is merely one of the many manifestations of the 'normal' state of selfishness in which man lives contentedly at present, and but for which he would be somewhat more akin to God. This kind of selfishness is thus quite natural. But, strange to say, it works in different ways, even in opposite ways, according to temperament. You will notice that while the Hindu says, "The *Bhagavad-Gita* is our *shāstra*. It holds the Truth, and teaches Liberation, *therefore* ... nobody else on Earth must have it. Anything rather than let it

be desecrated by a *mlechchha's* hand!"—the Christian, on his side, will just as selfishly say that the Bible is *his shāstra*, and that, because it holds the Truth and teaches him the way to Salvation, *therefore* ... everybody else must either accept it or be damned.

Thus you will see that the Hindu and the Christian are equally selfish, although their selfishness works in diametrically opposite ways. While the Hindu says, "We shall not allow anybody else to have Liberation;" the Christian says, "Everybody must take it in my way, or be damned everlastingly, and *we'll send men out to let those benighted Heathen know.*"

Between those two types of selfishness—of which, if you ask me, I'll frankly say *your own Philosophy* (as I read it) *prefers the Christian*, as being on the whole a manifestation of expanding life, however imperfect at outset,¹ and leading to further experience; whereas the purely negative restrictive Hindu variety is far more insidious, and ultimately more dangerous—between these two you have to choose, unless

1 *Gita*, iii, 8; xviii, 48.

you prefer to give the slip to both, and turn...
 ... Theosophist. They are simply manifestations of temperament. The temper of the West has given rise to a fanaticism of *pravritti*, of pushing forward; while the temper of the East has given rise to a fanaticism of *nivrtti*, of drawing back. First your *Pandit* will say that Mr. Brooks should not be allowed to read the GĪTA. *A born Mlechchha*—horror! Then he'll opine that Hindus of the *Shūdra* caste should not read it either. They must wait till some future birth. Then he'll begin to wonder whether *Vaishyas* and *Kshattriyas* are not too earthly after all. Clearly, it should be reserved for *Brāhmanas* alone. The others can ... be born again. But I am afraid the *Brāhmanas* will then begin arguing among themselves. The *Smārtas* (*advaitins*), will claim it as a *Vedāntic Upanishad*, while the *Vaishnavas* will question the right of the *Smārtas* to read it at all, for they largely worship Shiva, while the GĪTA is the teaching of *Shri Krishna*, the *Avatāra* of *Vishnu*, God of the *Vaishnavas*. They are His only worshippers. Who but *they* are fit to receive His Teaching? ..

Go on like that, and by and by you'll have it in the hands of a single man, and *he* will be quite unable to satisfy himself as to whether *he* has any real right to it after all.

Then, again, some say that the BHAGAVAD-GITA is pure *Upanishad*-Teaching—a thing of Mystery—and must therefore be strictly reserved for the few who are worthy to enter.

Now you should understand that *Upanishad* is a generic term signifying all Teaching uttered by one who has attained to spiritual Illumination, and capable of leading and stimulating others in their search for similar illumination. It is a kind of data, a sort of landmarks left behind by such as have attained transcendent Consciousness by self-sacrifice, by study and by meditation in bygone ages. All the Wisdom-utterances of such *Rishis*, “Seers,” are *Upanishad*, and are clearly of little use except to aspirants who care to, and can, assimilate them.

So I quite understand that in ancient times such Teachings were not common property¹. They were called *guhya ādesah*, “Secret Teach-

¹ This point is more fully discussed in *Sannyasa*, Chapter iii.

ings, Mystery-Teachings." I have no time to enter here into the detail of this important question. It may very well be that, in the remote past, Humanity was a little bit less mixed up than it is to-day. It may be that the Powers guiding Evolution led souls that required Enlightenment into such surroundings as could provide it most easily. Thus none were deprived who had a need for, and therefore a right to, these Teachings. In Ancient Greece, this is quite clear; for, there, the Mysteries were an Institution recognised by the State, and known to all. People who were not satisfied with the ordinary public teachings and ceremonies, knew full well where to apply for deeper interpretations of life, and further guidance; and, from one thing to another, they would, after due tests, be drafted to some place where they could get what they wanted.

But to-day a different method seems to prevail—a different method of drawing forth the strength of souls. Instead of being pampered with soul-feeding *satsanga*¹, souls that have

¹ Association with the spiritually great. The Communion of Saints.

evidently trodden the Path of Enlightenment to a greater or less extent in the past are now scattered, by the Powers that be, in all parts of the World and in all ranks of society. You will find them scattered about here and there irrespective of castes and classes. You will find them often struggling with dire privation—spiritual and moral privation of the most agonising description—amid utterly uncongenial surroundings. The result is that, just as the souls that require them, the Doctrines of Spiritual Enlightenment are being scattered about all over the dark mass of Humanity. *The scattering of souls having a right to certain Teachings, required the scattering of the Teachings themselves.*

But all this is mere theory, and I do not care much about it, however interesting it may seem. What concerns us here is the *fact* that the once hidden Scriptures of Wisdom *have been scattered*. You need not accuse me, for instance, of giving out the BHAGAVAD-GITA to the public. The *one* person whom you should take to task, who did this *enormous* thing here in India, is Veda-Vyāsa. He it was who had the boldness to include the

Upanishad of the GITA in the *Itihāsa* of the *Mahābhārata*. Now you know that *Itihāsa* means a kind of Scripture deliberately intended for the enlightenment of the public. It consists mainly of versified traditions of the lives, and deeds, and sayings of ancient saints, kings, sages—great examples of superior manhood and womanhood, intended for exhibition in public recitals and plays, and calculated to produce a kind of mental and emotional *satsanga*, or elevating association, among the people, so as to raise their ideals of manhood and womanhood.

As the very name implies, (for *Itihāsa*, *iti-ha-āsa*, means “Once upon a time there was...”), the *Itihāsa* traditions form the true *popular* Religion of India, published to *all* in the form of *kathās* of *Rāma-Līlās* etc., so that whoever cares may hear and receive benefit. Who is it, that included the BHAGAVAD-GITA in the *Mahābhārata* which is an *itihāsa* ? Surely it is not my fault, is it ? Yet *there it is* ; and I take it that Veda Vyāsa knew what He was about. If He did not, why call Him a *Rishi* ?

There was another great Person, by the way, who even gave His *life* for this—for this scattering of the highest Ideals from under the bushel of Mystery into the public places. It was Jesus Christ. For Jesus Christ was put to death because He gave to the common people Teachings which He was not supposed to divulge, because He spoke out the great *Vedāntic* Ideals of Self-Sacrifice, of Universal Brotherhood, which He, a member of an ascetic Brotherhood, was not supposed to reveal in public. His own pledged brethren compassed his death. This was the *reason*. The *pretext* and the method matter comparatively little.

So there has evidently been a great struggle going on, for a good many centuries, even among students of the Wisdom, between the conservative tendency, basing itself upon conditions and laws that held good in the past, but no longer hold good to-day; and the modern tendency to what we may call Spiritual Liberalism, backed by the highest Spiritual Genius on Earth. The conservatives are not really blameworthy where they are sincere, for they simply cling to a

Sacred Rule which has been true and good in ancient times, though it is no longer true and good to-day. Their resistance, though it cannot be successful in the end, is nevertheless made use of by the Hands that guide Mankind: it serves the purpose of a brake.

This, then—the *fact* of its being *itihāsa*—is one of the points which show that the GĪTĀ is certainly intended to be *placed within the reach of* the general public. The general public may not be expected to understand it very thoroughly for a long time to come. Yet it is intended to produce some sort of stimulation, to exercise some sort of influence upon the mind of the general public, quite apart from the few exceptional aspirants scattered among the ranks, to whom it comes as the spiritual pabulum without which they cannot live to do their life-work.

Let us now turn to the Scripture itself, and see what it has to say in the matter—whether there be any restriction in the GĪTĀ as to who should or who should not read it, whether in the Scripture itself there be any trace of restric-

tion such as, that only people of such and such a caste should read it, and others not; or that only people of such and such a country should read it, and others not; or that such and such formal observances and ceremonies are indispensable, barring which, the Teaching should be withheld—thus reserving the teaching for the followers of a certain sect, excluding others? In short, “*Whom does the BHAGAVAD GITA itself claim to belong to, and whom not?*”—such is the question.

If we turn to the Book itself, we find that, from the very outset, there is absolutely no restriction laid down—no restriction of an artificial sort, I mean, no restriction as to social status, colour, race, skin and so on. If you would make it a racial question I *have* something to say. I can tell you that there *is* a hint in the GITA. You may take it as a joke if you like, and I shall laugh with you. You know the GITA calls itself *krishna-arjuna-samvāda*, which means “Dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna.” Now *krishna* means ‘black,’ and *arjuna* means ‘white.’ So the GITA actually

calls itself a *Dialogue of Righteousness between black and white*¹! Now we are all likely to be caught somewhere between these two, my Brothers, are we not? So there does not seem to be any 'colour-line' in the GITA—any restriction confining it to the use of this or that shade of skin, white, yellow, red, brown, or black.

Next, is there any *caste* distinction—any restriction such as, that only *Brāhmanas* should read it, or only *Dvijās* (of the three higher castes) or only people having *some* caste or other, *outcastes* being excluded? Is there any restriction as to who may teach it—say, a *Brāhmana* only (as some actually suppose), and to another *Brāhmana* only—or to certain other castes as well.

Well, the first thing that suggests itself in this connection is to see *whom the GITA purports to have been given to*, and *by whom*. Now on opening the Book, you find that it was given by Shri Krishna to Arjuna; and nobody will ever say that either was a *Brāhmana* in the purely hereditary sense in which that word is used to-day.

¹ xviii, 70.

If by *Brāhmaṇa* you mean a 'man of God,' a 'godly man,' that is quite another affair; and that is the etymological meaning of the term. Meanwhile, I pray you, take good note of this strange fact, this momentous fact, that here we have, in your own sacred *Shāstra*, a marvellous Gem of *Upanishad* Teaching, purporting to have been originally given by a *Kshatriya* Prince to a *Kshatriya* warrior, not to take him away from active life into meditative solitude and retirement, but in order to place Duty in the forefront in life, in order to fit a warrior-prince for his arduous task.

Then glance at the substance of the Book itself. What do you find in passage after passage? You find that not only is there no restriction in the GITA as to what artificial class of people may or may not derive benefit from it; but that the highest Goal, the uttermost Spiritual Attainment taught therein, the most perfect Salvation, is the *Common Goal of all Humanity*; and that men and women, *irrespective of social status*, actually do attain, in their present life, to this uttermost Goal of Perfect Liberation,

if only they have the proper mind and heart, if only they have the inner moral and spiritual requisites, if only they can turn in all sincerity from their own selfish concerns to HIM who is the Common GOOD of All. In fact, of artificial restrictions, racial, geographical, social, there are *none* whatever in this Book. But moral restrictions there are, and there must ever be.

Let me quote only two verses as to this universality, this truly absolute catholicity of the GITA.

ये यथा माम् प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।

मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः॥

"From whatever side, from whatever direction, in whatever manner beings approach ME, in that selfsame manner do I welcome them ; for all the paths trodden of men, from all directions, converge in ME. I am the ultimate abutment of every human destiny." (iv, 11)

What this "ME" is, we shall see as we proceed. "ME" is essentially a *universal* Ideal, an Ideal of Universal Good, of Universal Love, of Universal Life, of Universal Truth. *There is no bigotry in this Book.* It is a Scripture of the World ; and, I take it, far brighter is the glory to India

that her Great Ancients *were* such universal Men, and that they gave such Universal Scriptures through the medium of that wonderful Sanskrit language, than if they had left you some petty heirloom of hole-and-corner 'revelations' for you to keep under a bushel and gloat over in sheer miserly delight that they were yours alone to enjoy.' Why, as we shall see further on, such is the very Essence of this Scripture, that you bar yourselves from the benefits of it the very moment you dream of barring others from deriving benefit.

I quote another verse, as to the social question :

मां हि पार्थ व्यपाश्रित्य येऽपि स्युः पापयोनयः
स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तेऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम् ॥

Even those who are born under the most evil conditions, who have inherited their own past demerits in a decayed society (Remember that Hindu Society was by no means perfect in *Shri Krishna's* days—quite the reverse, for He Himself tells us that He comes when the World is labouring under sin and sorrow and trouble, and *needs* Him. So, His speaking of women, *vaishyas* and *shūdras* as being 'born of the womb of sin,' born, through past demerit, under unfavourable circumstances, in unspiritual surroundings, by

no means implies that He endorses those evil, unbalanced social conditions : He merely states the melancholy fact as it happens to be. Note that the wives of exceptional people such as *Shri Krishna* and His friends can hardly be called fair samples of their time. Do not judge from them, I pray,)—" Even those, then, that are born under the most evil conditions can not only *receive* the Teaching, but, if they sincerely *live* it, and renounce themselves in its grand Ideal, *they*—women, *vaishyas*, *shûdras*—reach *the very highest Goal*, just as well as the most worthy *Brâhmanas* and *Kshatriyas*, born and bred in the most favourable surroundings."

Pray note once more that this does not justify the spiritual privation of the lower classes, the denial to them of religious teachings, of inspiring ideals. It merely states facts. Yet some people have made this verse a point of attack against the BHAGAVAD-GITA. It is utterly unwarranted. *Shri Krishna* knew that the *Brâhmanas* of His day had forgotten their duty, which was to train the *Kshatriyas* and spiritualise and elevate all the rest ; and that the *vaishyas* and *shûdras* had *therefore* no high ideals ; and that the women were mainly the goods and chattels of their husbands, and were considered as having no right to share in their culture, such as it was.

And yet you hear Him say : *No matter how unfavourable* the circumstances, if they only succeed in turning to ME, if they really open their hearts to the Ideal taught in the BHAGAVAD-GITA, they attain to the highest Goal, *no matter what they may be by birth*. Had there been *mlechchas, yāvanas* and so on, running all over India in those days, He would have taken them in as a matter of course—myself included.

Hence, neither in the setting of the Book (those circumstances under which the Teaching is given) nor in the body of the Teaching itself, do you find anything to exclude any deserving person, whatever his race or social status, from the benefit of the Teaching of the BHAGAVAD-GITA.

* * * * *

But the most important utterance, with regard to this question of ours, occurs right at the end of the Book ; and to this we shall now turn. Here you actually find S h r ī K ṛ s h ṇ a making His final recommendations to A r j u n a as to who may and who may not receive the Teaching which he Himself has just finished giving to

A r j u n a. If *this* does not answer our question, nothing else can ever do so.

Let us briefly run through the passage (xviii, 67—71.)

इदं ते नातपस्काय नामक्ताय कदाचन ।

न चाशुश्रुषवे वाच्यं न च मां योऽभ्यसूयति ॥

“This may be uttered for thee (or ‘by thee’), not to one without *tapas* nor to one without *bhakti*, nor yet to an unwilling hearer, nor to one who reviles ME.”

Here we find some difficult conditions laid down. They are not racial or geographical, to be sure. They are moral conditions: these none can question. But what are those conditions?

“This is utterable to you, A r j u n a, and to those who are like you.” There are degrees, as we shall see. But this verse strikes the highest keynote. It refers not merely to the utterance of the lip and its reception by the ear. *Vachyam*, here, means not merely the transmission of words, but the transmission of actual realisation—the utterance of the Spirit to the Spirit, the raising of the consciousness of the pupil to the Teacher’s own Plane of Perception.

This it is which, as a matter of fact, has been conferred on Arjuna in the Eleventh Chapter of the GITA. This is, it seems to me, what Ś h r ī K ṛ s h ṇ a means here. He means that the transmission of this Word of Spiritual Realisation—not merely of parrot or gramophone word-knowledge—cannot take place unless the recipient be both *tapaska* and *bhakta*. Besides, it cannot be transmitted to one who is unwilling to receive it, nor to one who *mām abhyasūyati*, “speaks slightly of ME.”

Now what is the meaning of all this ?

Tapaska is one who has *tapas*, who practises *tapas*. *Tapas* is generally translated by ‘austerity, asceticism, self-mortification.’ I think it has been largely understood, in past centuries, as self-torture—hanging oneself by a hook in the neck, lying on a bed of nails, keeping one’s arms raised until they wither—or, in latter-day puny ways, branding oneself with a conch-shell mark on the shoulder, and so on.

But really, here, the BHAGAVAD GITA has removed all difficulties from our way. In the Seventeenth Chapter, Ś h r ī K ṛ s h ṇ a mentions

the kind of *tapas* we have just been speaking of. Not only does He refuse to endorse it, but He condemns it unsparingly, classing the people who are addicted to it as 'devilish': "Know thou as very devils in their resolution those that practise terrible austerities (*tapas*), not prescribed by Scripture.....torturing the creature-hosts within their form, and ME, who am within their body, as well." He then goes on to define *tapas* as He understands it; and He defines it as *right conduct in mind, right conduct in speech, right conduct in body*. *Tapas* thus means right conduct, or self-control¹.

Therefore we are here being clearly told that *that* man is unfit to receive the transmission of the Teaching in its fullest sense, who is in any way a slave to any form of untruthfulness, or pride, or ambition; to passion—lust, anger, sensuality; or to bodily appetite of any sort. A man who is not self-controlled, that man has no right to His Teaching. Here again, my Brothers, it seems to me we have no racial or social or geographical limitations. The conditions are

¹ See *Gita*, xvii, 5, 6, 14-19.

purely *moral*, and we are 'all in the same boat' in that respect.

Now some people might be practising self-control in an apparently successful way and yet they might be lacking in the divine Grace of self-surrender. They might have the *ahankāra* of austerity as it were. So, *tapas* might be conceived to exist without *bhakti*, without self-surrender to the Greater Good, to the Common Purpose. Such selfish *tapas* would not do, says Śhrī Kṛṣṇa. Nor will *bhakti* without *tapas* do—for that would mean a kind of superior emotional gush, unrestrained spiritual ebullition, as it were; a running to waste of Divine Energy which ought to be properly canalised for God's Great Uses.

The balancing of these two words, *tapaska* and *bhakta* catches you between two fires, as it were. You must have the Power of self-control, but you must combine with it the Grace of self-surrender. You must control your nature by Will but that Will must be the servant, not of your own selfish purposes, but of God's purpose. This double condition is of course a difficult one;

but everybody can *begin*. Most of the things that seem impossible are reached in time through simple beginnings. Whatever you try to do by way of loving Service, and to do discriminat- ingly, efficiently, methodically at the same time, makes you both *bhakta* and *tapaska* to some extent.

Next, the Realisation cannot be transmitted to one who does not *wish* to hear, to one who does not *wish* to realise. Roughly speaking, if you have no appetite for a certain kind of food, it is not likely to profit you. The same rule holds good in the moral world as in the physical.

Further, the Realisation is not for those "who speak slightly of ME." What does this mean ? Some Vaishnavas will say : "S h r ī K ṛ ṣ ṇ a is *our own* God V i s ṇ u." It is *He*, and none other, who speaks here. Followers of other sects, non-Vaishnavas, who will not worship V i s ṇ u as the *highest* God, are by that very fact slighting Him. It is these that are here barred by S h r ī K ṛ ṣ ṇ a. The GITA is not for them.

But who is the GOD of the BHAGAVAD-GITA,

the God who speaks through S h r ī K ṛ s h ṇ a ? What does *He Himself* claim to be ? Whatever people say *about Him* is worthless compared to that, compared to what *He Himself* has to tell us about *Himself*. Now He defines HIMSELF, over and over and over again, as *the One Universal GOD than whom there is no other*—the GOD of Universal Truth, Universal Love, Universal Life. (I have no time for explanation and quotation *now*, but the whole of my subsequent lectures will go to prove this. Take it for granted meantime, I pray.)

It all comes to this, then, that *yo mām abhya-sūyati*, “the man who reviles MF,” is simply the man who scoffs at the grand Ideals of Universal Truth, and Universal Good and Universal Love. He is precisely the *bigot* who will not share the Truths of Religion with his fellow-men, who thereby denies Religion in its very Essence which is Communion, the Binding together of all in God. That man, so to say, repudiates a portion of the Wholesale Humanity which S h r ī K ṛ s h ṇ a includes and impersonates. “The Enjoyer of *all true tapas* and

Sacrifice, the Overlord of *all* creatures, the Lover of *all* creatures," thus He defines Himself; and there is not a single verse in the whole Book which could allow an intelligent reader to say that Śhrī Kṛṣṇa is the little private godling of one sect of bigots, finding his chief delight in being exalted by them above all the other little godlings of all the other sects. Such a godling is what Śhrī Kṛṣṇa calls *anya-devatā*, "an 'other' god." If you uphold your godling—no matter what his name may be—be it even "Kṛṣṇa"—as 'other' than *the ONE Common God* of all beings, you are precisely, then, going against the God of the BHAGAVAD-GITA, spurning *the Kṛṣṇa* of the BHAGAVAD-GITA; you are excluding yourselves, according to His own statement, from any true Reception of the Teaching of the BHAGAVAD-GITA. *The BHAGAVAD-GITA does not belong to you.*

But there are not only religious bigots. There are also racial bigots—and many other sorts as well, which I have no time to mention here. For instance, the man who dares prophesy that "East is East and West is West, and *never the*

*twain shall meet*¹ ! ” That East is East and West is West is plain enough. As well say that India is India and England is England, and my nose is my nose and my ear is my ear. But the rest of that sentence...*mām abhyasūyati*. It sets itself against God's Wholeness, reflected in the *wholeness* of Mankind, as of any other Cosmic Limb.

Well, examine yourselves, you who would *exclude*—whether by domineering over others, or by shrinking back upon yourselves—examine yourselves and see whether you are not barring yourselves, through *partiality*, from all true Realisation of the Teaching of the GITA.

The next two verses (68,69) give us in beautiful language the positive complement of the previous verse of negative precept.

¹ In justice to Kipling, I should have quoted what follows those words in his poem : “ Till West and East are face to face at God's Great Judgment Seat ” or something to that effect. And if we remember that God's Great Judgment Seat is not above the clouds, on some Theatrical Doomsday, but *here and now* within our very hearts as we go on with the day's work, we shall see that Kipling may as well be ‘let off’ on this count. It is always dangerous to quote at second hand.

य इदं परमं गुह्यं मदभक्तेष्वभिधास्यति ।
 भक्तिं मयि परां कृत्वा मामेवैष्यत्यसंशयम् ॥
 न च तस्मान्मनुष्येषु कश्चिन्मे प्रियकृत्तमः ।
 भविता न च मे तस्मादन्यः प्रियतरो भुवि ॥

“ But *whoever* (no racial or social distinction, here) shall declare this supreme Mystery among My Lovers (Lovers of the Universal Ideal of Truth, Good, Life, Love, irrespective of race, creed, caste, sex)—such Deed of highest Love for ME shall surely draw him nigh to ME ;

“ Nor lives there one in all Mankind
 who dearer Service does to Me,
 Therefore no other man on Earth
 shall be more dearly loved of Me.”

This is something more than permission, it seems to me ; something more than mere encouragement, even ; it is the freest and fullest Blessing conceivable, unstintingly given to *whoever* is willing and able to stand up and hand on to sympathetic hearers, like yourselves, the Good he has himself received.

But pass on, and what do you find next ?

Not only is this Teaching intended for practical transmission, for the handing on of the contagion of Realisation from Teacher to pupil,

but it is also clearly intended for individual reading and study. For those who come across His teaching in that way, He says, excluding *none* who may care to learn :

अध्येष्यते च य इमं धर्मं संवादमावयोः ।

ज्ञानयज्ञेन तेनाहमिष्टः स्यामिति मे मतिः ॥

“And *whoever* shall study this Dialogue of Righteousness between us two, that man will be worshipping ME with *jñāna-yajña*, with the Sacrifice of Wisdom, the gradual surrender of false consciousness to True—thus I deem.”

Then lastly He concludes by putting in a word for simple folk who are not yet able to understand intellectually, but are willing to listen with respect. He says :

श्रद्धावाननसूयश्च शृणुयादपि यो नरः ।

सोऽपि मुक्तः शुभांल्लोकान्प्राप्नुयात्पुण्यकर्मणाम् ॥

“Even the man who merely happens to hear, who may be able to do no more than *listen*—but with an innocent heart, with trust, with confidence, without criticising what he cannot yet comprehend—such a one, when set free by the kind Hand of Death, may well look forward to progress in Knowledge and Wisdom in the glorious worlds of the Doers of Pure Deeds.”

Faith, here, does not mean ‘blind faith,’ as usually understood. It is rather an intuition, a

confident feeling that *there is something good in it*, that the Teaching that made the *Rishis* what They were, and came down to us through Them, cannot but be beautiful, and good, and grand, even where we, poor brains and hearts, cannot quite fathom it. A *good* Teaching may not be immediately assimilable; but if you would hope to assimilate it later on, you must learn to reverence, even where you do not yet understand. To reverence does not mean to dogmatise.

This is a condition which even very 'intelligent' people may altogether fail to fulfil. There are people who *will not* respect that which they themselves are not able to compass. Suppose a busy man of the world is urged by his friends to read the BHAGAVAD-GITA because it is becoming the fashion, because many other people are reading it; and what not. First he may say he has no time. Then, when you have worried him enough, he curiously glances at a few passages in an interval hastily snatched between two business appointments, and, to be rid of the pother, jumps at the conclusion that it is all

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the balloon inside the dealwood box. He is
trying his best to expand, pushing gently against

metaphysical nonsense, and not worth wasting time on. He thus puts the Book aside *with his mind closed against it*. Does not this man remind you of a well-known fable? When one can't get at the grapes, what a comfort it is to be able to tell oneself that they are sour! No hope of the least benefit for such as he.

But take a man who is respectful, a simple, earnest *man of good-will*. He will remain in what we may call an attitude of aspiration. He may have neither the brain nor the leisure, yet he aspires. Such a man, we are told, will have abundant occasion to benefit after death, though he may not seem to do so in his present life. How?

Imagine for instance a small balloon—the inner air-chamber of a foot-ball will do. Pack it inside a small dealwood box, with a hole in it for pumping. As you pump air in, the balloon expands. But it cannot do so to its fullest extent because the box imprisons it. Similarly with the man whose aspirations are somewhat stifled by circumstance. You may liken him to the balloon inside the dealwood box. He is trying his best to expand, pushing gently against

the sides of the box in all directions. Now somebody comes with a hammer, and breaks open the box, leaving the balloon free to expand to its true dimensions. Such the aspiring man, at death, however limited he may have been down here.

On the other hand, a man who has no aspirations, who has no ideals, who spurns all that lies beyond his own petty grasp—such a man's soul actually shrinks upon itself. He may fitly be compared with an empty, shrunken balloon, a little formless, crumpled thing lying inside the dealwood box. When Death comes, and the box is broken...well, there the thing lies, a little crumpled India-rubber rag, that does not expand at all.

So, the man who listens with reverence to *Shri Krishna's* Teaching, even when he can as yet but listen—that man, dying after a life of patient, quiet, confident aspiration, expands to his true dimensions after death. That man expands and rises to the radiant worlds where the doers of pure deeds await him, and where, in communion with great and noble souls, he actually begins to imbibe the Wisdom which he could as

yet but long for in this life. When he comes back again to earth, next time, he will be better fitted for the swift progress which has, owing to his previous lack of endeavour, been denied him in his present life.

Thus you see that the GITA is equally intended for the Man of perfect Love and Self-Mastery, and for the kind-hearted, aspiring simpleton. There is a wide range between these two extremes. A man who has mastered the attitude of self-control and self-surrender combined, has fitted himself for actual transformation into Spiritual Consciousness. That man can receive the Grace of the GITA in full ; and from that man downwards, right down to the simplest man of good-will—*right through*—what is the real condition laid down ? It is simply *capacity*. Capacity to assimilate, whether immediate or remote. *Capacity*, and nothing else. Nothing about race or creed or caste or sex or colour.

Just consider, my brothers, whether this be not simply a doctrine of commonsense after all—and a scientific doctrine to boot ? Take for instance eating. You know that eating does not merely consist in putting things into your

stomach. If you think it does, then *take this watch and eat it*. You might of course swallow it if you took the trouble. But that would not be eating it. Eating is not merely passing a thing through your body. Eating is assimilating, transforming the things you eat into your own living blood, nerves, bone, brain, muscle. What is true of the assimilation of food is equally true of the assimilation of knowledge. And Scripture is of course a means of conveying the truest, the most necessary, the most vital kind of knowledge.

So the ultimate conclusion is, that *the GITA belongs to the man who can assimilate it*; and that is only the teaching of commonsense. If a man can obtain any good, either here or hereafter, that good does not belong to him by an artificial dictum. It cannot be conferred upon him as an honorific title. He must *assimilate it*; then only does it really belong to him. If he is not able to assimilate it, it cannot really *belong* to him by any ascription from outside.

Let me give you a little anecdote in this connection. It is good to end with an anecdote.

When the Amir of Afghanistan came to India

a few years back, he visited a good many places, among them the well-known Aligarh College. I was very much amused at finding the following incident in the papers of the day :

As the Amir was being taken round the College by the venerable old Trustees, he happened at one time to be much interested in the drilling of boys on a playground, and stopped to see it. But the old gentlemen were pulling him by the sleeve, as it were, inviting him to come and see something else. "What is it?" said the Amir. —"Will your Majesty be pleased to step this way? We wish to show your Majesty the oldest copy of the Qoran that is to be found in India. It is more than six hundred years old!" —"But," the Amir replied, "I have come here to see boys, and not books." —"Oh, your Majesty! The...*oldest*...copy of our...Sacred...!!"

—"Look here," said the Amir, quietly, "If you have a copy of *Omar Khayyâm* on your grandfather's book-shelf, does that make you a Persian Poet?"

Similarly, I venture to suggest to you that being the descendants of the *Rshis* and having the GITA on your grandfather's bookshelf, and

hearing it recited every day from your infancy, means next to nothing. Even if you yourself can recite it by heart from start to finish, and backwards, and across both ways, with half-a-dozen commentaries to boot, *that* does not make you a *real* possessor of the GITA. If you will only give me money enough, I can get you a gramophone with the GITA and all the commentaries in its belly, ready to disgorge at will. But that gramophone will not have *received* the GITA. The only *receiving* of the Truth, the only *possession* of the Scripture, is *the building of the Teaching into your life*. There is nothing that can make you a possessor of the *shāstra* unless you approach it in the right *vital* spirit. The *shāstra* belongs to him who illustrates it in his life, who builds its Wisdom into his mind, his body, his action and his speech. The GITA, like all real Scripture, belongs to the man who can love its inspiring Ideals—better still, to the man who strives to *live* it. And this has nothing to do with either race, or caste, or sex, or creed, or colour.

OM SHANTIH—PEACE.



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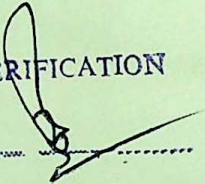
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